

Listing of claims:

1. *(Currently amended)* A liftgate assembly, comprising:
a unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side plates and an extension plate
extending between the side plates;
a hydraulically driven lift frame pivotally attached to the side plates;
a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the lift frame and supported at one end only; and
~~wherein the unitary frame, the hydraulically driven lift frame, and the liftgate platform~~
~~form a freestanding assembly.~~
impact bumpers attached to the side plates.
2. *(Currently amended)* The liftgate assembly of claim 1, wherein the opposing pair
of side plates are adapted to secure the ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly to an underside of a vehicle
body.
3. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate assembly of claim 2, wherein the opposing
pair of side plates are bolted to the underside of the vehicle body.
4. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate assembly of claim 1, wherein the side plates
in the unitary frame further comprise formed steps.
5. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate assembly of claim 1, further comprising a
hydraulic pump mounted on the unitary frame and coupled to the lift frame.
6. *(Canceled)*
7. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate assembly of claim 1, further comprising
brackets attached to the side plates in the unitary frame for mounting vehicle lights.
8. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate assembly of claim 1, wherein the lift frame
further includes a lift frame tube configured to function as an underride guard.

9. *(Currently amended)* The liftgate assembly of claim 1, wherein:
the ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly includes at least one upper stacking member and at least one lower stacking member; and
a profile of the lower stacking member is configured to nest with a profile of the upper stacking member.

10. *(Currently amended)* A vehicle liftgate assembly comprising:
a vehicle having a substantially horizontal vehicle bed; and
a liftgate comprising:
a unitary frame, the unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side plates configured to be secured to an underside of the vehicle bed and an extension plate extending between the side plates;
an actuator driven lift frame pivotally attached to the side plates; ~~and~~
a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the lift frame and supported at one end only; and
~~wherein the unitary frame, the actuator driven lift frame and the liftgate platform form a freestanding assembly before being secured to the underside of the vehicle body.~~
impact bumpers attached to the side plates.

11. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle liftgate assembly of claim 10, wherein the side plates are secured to the underside of the vehicle bed by bolts.

12. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle liftgate assembly of claim 10, wherein:
the vehicle further includes a vehicle chassis; and
the unitary frame of the liftgate is detached from the vehicle chassis.

13. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle liftgate assembly of claim 10, wherein:
the vehicle bed comprises a truck bed floor; and
the unitary frame is mounted substantially below the truck bed floor.

14. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle liftgate assembly of claim 13, wherein the extension plate is mounted in a plane formed by the truck bed floor to provide a bridge from the

truck bed to the liftgate platform when the liftgate platform is horizontally extended in the plane of the truck bed floor.

15. *(Allowed)* A liftgate, comprising:

(a) a unitary frame having an opposing pair of side plates, a trunnion tube extending and an extension plate extending between the side plates, wherein the side plates are adapted to secure the unitary frame to an underside of a vehicle body;

(b) a lift frame having:
an opposing pair of parallelogram linkages each having an upper arm, a lower arm, a proximal pivot member secured to the trunnion tube, and a distal pivot member; and
a lift frame tube extending between the lower arms of the parallelogram linkages;

(c) a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the distal pivot members and supported at one end only;

(d) a stop mounted on each parallelogram linkage adjacent the distal pivot member and configured to prevent rotation of the liftgate platform away from the upper and lower arms past a generally horizontal orientation parallel with a bed of the vehicle body and configured to allow rotation of the liftgate platform toward the upper and lower arms to a generally vertical position perpendicular with the bed of the vehicle body when in a lowered position; and

(e) an extendable actuator pivotally secured at one end to the trunnion tube and at another end to the lift frame tube;
wherein:

before being secured to the underside of the vehicle body, the unitary frame, the lift frame the liftgate platform, and the extendable actuator forms a freestanding assembly with the liftgate platform in a stowed position; and

when the liftgate platform is rotated to a horizontal orientation, extension of the actuator raises the liftgate platform from a lowered position to a raised position while maintaining the horizontal orientation, and when the liftgate platform is rotated to a vertical orientation, extension of the actuator raises and inverts the liftgate platform into the stowed position.

16. *(Allowed)* The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the side plates are secured to at least one sub-structure cross member of the vehicle body.

17. *(Allowed)* The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the extension plate is secured to at least one horizontal frame member of the vehicle body.

18. *(Allowed)* The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the side plates and the extension plate are secured to the vehicle body by bolts or welding.

19. *(Allowed)* The liftgate of claim 15, wherein the extendable actuator is a hydraulic cylinder.

20. *(Previously canceled)*

21. *(Currently amended)* A method for providing a cantilever liftgate comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side plates and an extension plate extending between the side plates;
- (b) pivotally attaching a lift frame to the side plates;
- (c) rotatably attaching a liftgate platform to the lift frame so that the platform is supported at one end only; and

~~wherein the unitary frame, the lift frame, and the liftgate platform forms a freestanding liftgate assembly.~~

- (d) attaching impact bumpers to the side plates.

22. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of shipping the ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly to a customer.

23. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of stacking the ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly on top of another ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly.

24. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of packaging and shipping the stacked ~~freestanding liftgate assemblies~~ liftgates together.

25. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of securing the ~~freestanding liftgate assembly~~ to a vehicle body by bolting or welding the unitary frame to the base of a truck bed.

26. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of attaching a motion limit member to ~~the pivot member~~ a pivot member of the lift frame to confine a motion of the liftgate platform between a first orientation and a second orientation substantially perpendicular to each other.

27. *(Currently amended)* A liftgate, comprising:
a unitary frame including an opposing pair of side plates and an extension plate extending there between, each of the side plates having an upper edge adapted for attaching to an underside of a body;
a lift frame pivotally attached to the side plates of the unitary frame and having a pivot member;
a platform having a first side rotatably attached to the pivot member of the lift frame, the platform being supported at the first side only;
a motion limiting stop attached to the lift frame adjacent the pivot member and configured to limit a motion of the platform; and
~~wherein the unitary frame, the lift frame, and the platform form a freestanding assembly.~~
impact bumpers attached to the side plates.

28. *(Currently amended)* The liftgate of claim 27, wherein the upper edge of each side plate in the unitary frame is adapted for attaching ~~the freestanding assembly~~ to the underside of a vehicle body.

29. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate of claim 27, further comprising a plurality of bolts for bolting the upper edges of the side plates in the unitary frame to the underside of the body.

30. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate of claim 27, wherein the side plates in the unitary frame further comprise formed steps.

31. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate of claim 27, further comprising a hydraulic pump mounted on the unitary frame and coupled to the lift frame.

32. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate of claim 27, further comprising impact bumpers attached to the unitary frame.

33. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate of claim 27, further comprising brackets attached to the side plates in the unitary frame for mounting vehicle lights.

34. *(Previously presented)* The liftgate of claim 27, wherein the lift frame further includes a lift frame tube configured to function as an underride guard.

35. *(Currently amended)* The liftgate of claim 27, wherein the ~~freestanding assembly~~ unitary frame further includes at least one upper stacking member on an upper edge of each of the side plates and at least one lower stacking member on a lower edge of each of the side plates, a profile of the lower stacking member being configured to nest with a profile of the upper stacking member.

36. *(Currently amended)* A vehicle body assembly including a vehicle body and a cantilever liftgate, the cantilever liftgate comprising:

a unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side plates and an extension plate extending there between, the side plates having upper edges configured to be attached to an underside of the vehicle body;

an actuator driven lift frame pivotally attached to the side plates;

a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the actuator driven lift frame; and

~~wherein the unitary frame, the actuator driven lift frame, and the platform form a freestanding liftgate before being attached to the vehicle body.~~

impact bumpers attached to the side plates.

37. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle body assembly of claim 36, wherein the upper edges of the side plates are securely attached to the vehicle body by bolts.

38. *(Currently amended)* The vehicle body assembly of claim 36, wherein the lift frame is configured to be attached to the unitary frame ~~to form the freestanding liftgate~~ prior to the upper edges of the side plates being attached to the vehicle body.

39. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle body assembly of claim 36, the cantilever liftgate further comprising a motion limiting stop attached to the lift frame and configured to limit a rotational motion of the liftgate platform.

40. *(Previously presented)* The vehicle body assembly of claim 36, wherein the extension plate is substantially coplanar with a floor of the vehicle body.

41. *(Currently amended)* A cantilever liftgate for use with a vehicle having a bed, comprising:

(a) a unitary frame having an opposing pair of side plates, a trunnion tube and an extension plate extending between the side plates, wherein the side plates are secured to an underside structure of the vehicle bed;

(b) a lift frame having an opposing pair of parallelogram linkages, each having an upper and a lower ~~arms~~ arm and a proximal pivot and a distal pivot ~~members~~ member, and a lift frame tube extending between the lower arms, wherein the proximal pivot members are secured to the trunnion tube;

(c) a liftgate platform rotatably attached to the distal pivot members;

(d) a stop configured mounted on each parallelogram linkage adjacent the distal pivot member to prevent a rotation of the liftgate platform away from the upper and lower arms past a first orientation substantially parallel with the vehicle bed and allowing a rotation of the liftgate platform toward the upper and lower arms to a second orientation substantially perpendicular to the vehicle bed;

(e) an extendable actuator pivotally secured at one end to the trunnion tube and at another end to the lift frame tube, an extension of the actuator raising the liftgate platform in the first orientation to a raised position and inverting the liftgate platform in the second orientation into a stowed position; and

before being secured to the underside structure of the vehicle bed, the unitary frame, the lift ~~frame~~ frame, the liftgate platform, and the extendable actuator forms a freestanding liftgate assembly with the liftgate platform in the stowed position.

42. *(Previously presented)* The cantilever liftgate of claim 41, wherein the side plates are secured to at least one underside sub-structure cross member of the vehicle bed.

43. *(Previously presented)* The cantilever liftgate of claim 41, wherein the extension plate is secured to at least one horizontal frame member of the vehicle bed.

44. *(Previously presented)* The cantilever liftgate of claim 41, wherein the side plates and the extension plate are secured to the vehicle bed by bolts or welding.

45. *(Previously presented)* The cantilever liftgate of claim 41, wherein the extendable actuator includes a hydraulic cylinder.

46. *(Currently amended)* A method for providing a cantilever liftgate, comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a unitary frame comprising an opposing pair of side plates and an extension plate extending between the side plates;
- (b) pivotally attaching a lift frame to the side plates;
- (c) rotatably attaching a liftgate platform to a pivot member of the lift frame so that the platform is supported at one end only;
- (d) attaching a motion limit member to the pivot member of the lift frame; and
~~wherein the unitary frame, the lift frame, and the liftgate platform forms a freestanding liftgate assembly.~~
- (e) attaching impact bumpers to the side plates.

47. *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 46, further comprising, after steps (a), (b), (c), and (d) have been completed, the step of securing the unitary frame to an underside of a vehicle body.

48. *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 47, wherein the step of securing the unitary frame to an underside of a vehicle body includes bolting or welding the unitary frame to a base of the truck bed.

49. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 46, further comprising, after steps (a), (b), (c), and (d) have been completed, the step of stacking the ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly on top of another ~~freestanding~~ liftgate assembly.

50. *(Currently amended)* The method of claim 49, further comprising the step of packaging and shipping the stacked ~~freestanding liftgate assembly~~ liftgates together.

51. *(Previously presented)* The method of claim 46, wherein the step of attaching a motion limit member to the pivot member of the lift frame includes confining a motion of the liftgate platform between a first orientation and a second orientation substantially perpendicular to each other.